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I Get It! I Finally Get It!! Memoirs - Living with an Alcoholic

Jo Bines
Xlibris (Jul 15, 2014)
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With detail, humor, and honest reflection, Bines finds catharsis in sharing her feelings about her divorce and life with cancer.

In *I Get It! I Finally Get It!!: Memoirs—Living with an Alcoholic*, Jo Bines reflects back on her sixty plus years of life, touching on her forty-year marriage to an alcoholic and her ongoing challenges with cancer. She has assumed many roles in her life, and she uses this book as her catharsis.

In 2007, Bines spent four days in August wondering what her husband was doing and where he was. The straw that broke the camel's back was when the neighbors knew more about his whereabouts than she did. She moved forward with a legal separation. After receiving a precarious medical diagnosis in 2011, she decided it was time for her to focus on herself and proceeded to craft this memoir.

The struggle Bines goes through with her various health challenges makes for inspiring reading. She faces these challenges with strength and humor, providing a counterpoint to her long-over marriage. Unfortunately, much of the memoir that centers on her marriage has the uncomfortable feel of discovering someone's private journal on a bedside table. Her intention is to provide a cautionary tale, but some of the minutiae of her relationship with her husband seems contradictory. In one chapter she is talking about how her husband berated their daughter for no reason, and in a subsequent chapter, she calls him kindhearted.

While the subtitle focuses on life with an alcoholic, the memoir really focuses on their marriage as a whole. Her husband's drinking is brought up early, but then she launches into the story of their lives together without much mention of the alcohol until well into the narrative. This lack of focus is carried through the book.

While the intent to help others in a similar situation is noble, this book also suffers from an identity crisis. Is it a true published memoir, or is it simply just a collection of journal entries put into print? Often, the reminiscence is interrupted with a current feeling during the writing. For instance, she discusses an occasion when her husband became drunk and ranted at the family, threatening that if he had a gun, he would shoot them all. Suddenly, she interrupts the story with, "I feel very nauseated right now and I have a headache. Writing this is probably raising my blood pressure. The cancer pain hasn't subsided this morning even after taking my meds."

Though the title doesn't exactly fit the content of the book, those who like memoirs with a great deal of detail will find this of great interest.

LYNN EVARTS (September 30, 2014)

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